

SENATE JOURNAL
JOURNAL NO. 10
DATE 3/14/13
PAGE SB 375

63rd Montana Legislature March 14, 2013

Support for Senator Peterson's Senate Bill 375.

This bill will go a long way toward closing loopholes that hurt Montana politics. This bill corrects a double standard of transparency. Current law requires only **some** who contribute to campaigns to identify themselves.

Two points in support of this bill

1) In no way does this bill impair the freedom of speech or expression. This bill **reinforces** our Montana Constitution regarding our inalienable rights: Section 3 reads, "In enjoying these rights, all persons recognize corresponding responsibilities." Those responsibilities include disclosure of who is speaking. This bill protects free speech equitably.

Legislators labor under the constant scrutiny of the public eye and ear; why should others – who work overtly to elect or defeat them – be allowed to operate in secrecy? This bill eliminates that double standard.

In this country a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty – Libelous, unaccountable speech is a guilt sentence in the court of public opinion.

2) The argument that this bill could give incumbents an advantage is neutralized by the fact that **current law** gives incumbents an advantage. How? The volume of slanderous and unaccountable attacks in the last campaign has frightened citizens away from stepping up to serve the public. Could this be the effect these abusers of campaign laws desire? The fewer independent thinkers, the easier it is to gain control.

In conclusion: Senate Bill 375 will rally the respectability of Montana politics. I can say from personal experience that people I heard on doorsteps and the phone during the last campaign were disgusted and offended by the manipulations from anonymous sources with outside agendas.

Please give this bill a do pass. It will go a long way toward restoring the spirit of local representative government which is what our founders expected of our republic.